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SUBJECT: PM TUSK RESHUFFLES CABINET IN WAKE OF CORRUPTION SCANDAL

Classified By: Political Counselor Dan Sainz for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: In an effort to "ensure public trust" in his government and in the ruling Civic Platform (PO), PM Tusk announced October 7 the resignations of Deputy PM / Interior Minister Grzegorz Schetyna, Justice Minister Andrzej Czuma, and Deputy Economy Minister Adam Szejnfeld. Tusk said he had asked Schetyna -- his party organizer and PO secretary general -- to take over as head of the party's parliamentary caucus. Former caucus chair Zbigniew Chlebowski resigned last week in the wake of allegations that he and Sports Minister Drzewiecki had inappropriately lobbied on behalf of a Polish gambling concern to weaken provisions in the Government's draft gaming bill. Tusk also said three key advisors -- government spokesman Pawel Gras, domestic policy advisor Rafal Grupinski, and the chief of his political cabinet, Slawomir Nowak -- would resign their government positions. Tusk explained the moves partly as an effort to strengthen the PO parliamentary caucus -- depleted by the move of key deputies to the European Parliament -- during the parliamentary investigation of the scandal. Tusk's aggressive response to the scandal has steadied public support for him, although some pundits question his tendency to govern by the polls. He removed some of his closest colleagues in government in part due to their poor public explanations and/or low public support, although no illegalities have been proven. Nor will the demotions of leading ministers quiet critics who still seek to know who in the Prime Minister's office tipped off those under investigation. END SUMMARY.

TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY PARAMOUNT

¶12. (SBU) During a 30-minute press conference to announce the resignations, Tusk repeatedly emphasized the key underlying principles of his government -- trust and transparency. He stressed that corruption allegations against all members of his government would be thoroughly investigated and said he would support proposals to establish a parliamentary investigative commission. Although no evidence has been presented that any of the ministers engaged in criminal acts, Tusk said he holds officials in his government to a higher ethical standard. Because former PO parliamentary caucus chair Chlebowski and former Sports Minister Drzewiecki had "acted inappropriately" in lobbying other ministers on behalf of a Polish gambling concern, Tusk said he had no choice but to dismiss them.

¶13. (SBU) In order to ensure that his government would be able to function effectively and to protect it from "traps" laid by the opposition, Tusk said he had asked Deputy PM Grzegorz Schetyna and Deputy Economics Minister Adam Szejnfeld to resign from their positions in the government. Both Schetyna and Szejnfeld had been mentioned as potential points of leverage in telephone conversations among Chlebowski, Drzewiecki, and representatives of the Polish gambling

concern. Tusk said Szejnfeld had been an "unwilling participant" in the affair and would remain outside of government until the investigation's conclusion. Tusk also defended Schetyna, who he said was being unfairly criticized for the mistakes of others. He hinted both Szejnfeld and Schetyna would regain their jobs if the parliamentary investigation proved them innocent.

CZUMA OUT. CIMOSZEWCZ IN?

¶4. (C) Stressing the importance of an impartial investigation, Tusk said he had asked Justice Minister Andrzej Czuma to step down. When the scandal first broke last week, Czuma was the first government official to come to the defense of Chlebowski and Drzewiecki. At a press conference with a national prosecutor, Czuma expressed confidence that Justice Ministry prosecutors would find both men innocent of corruption charges. Tusk acknowledged that Czuma was asked to leave because his impartiality was questioned not just by the opposition Law and Justice (PiS), but by the public as well.

¶5. (C) Earlier in the day, Tusk reportedly offered former PM Wladzimierz Cimoszewicz, until recently Poland's candidate for Council of Europe SYG, the position of Justice Minister. According to media, Cimoszewicz said he would accept the offer on the condition that Tusk also named him Deputy PM. Although Tusk refused, negotiations reportedly continue. Media also speculate that Cimoszewicz is interested in the position of Foreign Minister and that Tusk would be willing to reassign current FM Sikorski to the Defense Ministry -- a

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move Sikorski clearly would not welcome. Cimoszewicz is being courted to run for president in 2010 under the banner of the opposition Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). By bringing Cimoszewicz into his camp, Tusk would eliminate a strong potential rival for the position.

SCHETYNA AND KEY ADVISORS REINFORCE PARLIAMENTARY FLANK

¶6. (C) In perhaps the most surprising move, Tusk asked Schetyna to take over as chair of the PO's parliamentary caucus. PO discipline in the Sejm has suffered in the wake of key Tusk insiders' departure for Strasbourg following June's EuroParliament elections. Schetyna, Tusk's close friend and behind-the-scenes party organizer, will keep his job as the party's secretary general. Tusk expressed "full confidence" in Schetyna and said he had asked key advisors in the PM Chancellery -- spokesman Pawel Gras, domestic policy advisor and chief speech-writer Rafal Grupinski, and political cabinet chief Slawomir Nowak -- to leave their government positions to join Schetyna in the parliamentary caucus presidium. Gras has been the subject of a separate corruption investigation for months.

ANTI-CORRUPTION BUREAU CHIEF ALSO OUT

¶7. (C) Tusk also announced he would initiate procedures to recall the controversial head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (CBA), Mariusz Kaminski. Tusk alleged that PiS was using Kaminski and CBA to wage a political war on PO and the Government. (NB: Kaminski, a former PiS MP, was appointed head of CBA in 2006 by the previous PiS Government.) Reiterating his zero-tolerance policy on corruption, Tusk said it was not appropriate for Kaminski to remain in office because prosecutors had filed charges against Kaminski for allegedly overstepping his authority and forging documents in an unrelated corruption investigation in 2007. PiS officials alleged the charges against Kaminski were politically motivated. Tusk repeated his promise that there would be a thorough, impartial investigation, adding that any Government official who tried to sweep information under the carpet

would be immediately dismissed.

COMMENT

¶8. (C) PiS official have made clear in public statements that they are "after Tusk's head" in the worst government scandal since the PO-led coalition came to power in October 2007. By purging his government of tainted ministers -- even if they are only guilty by association -- Tusk is attempting to protect his government's ability to govern and to restore public trust. That said, there's a fine line between "public trust" and "public support" as registered in opinion polls. Tusk has long been criticized for formulating policy on the basis of polling numbers, and was called out by the press for telling Drzewiecki he could keep his job if he convincingly explained himself to the public. Drzewiecki didn't. With members of his inner circle, including the party's chief enforcer Schetyna, in charge of the parliamentary caucus, Tusk can let the scandal play out in parliament. without jeopardizing public support for himself or his government. While public support for PO has dropped in the past week, Tusk himself has not been affected. Polls continue to predict he would easily defeat President Kaczynski in next year,s presidential elections. However, the expected investigations will have to determine, among other things, who in the Prime Minister's chancellery tipped off key PO officials who were under investigation.

TULLEY